

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Beatrice Kaneshiro

"Somebody was telling that, 'If I don't have anywhere to go, I go to Columbia Inn and just sit in the bar and somebody will come and get together and talk.' They don't make arrangements and say, 'Let's meet there.' Once in a while, maybe, but most of them say, well, they alone. So they just go there and sit in the bar, and you see all your friends come."

Beatrice Kaneshiro, the fourth of eight children, was born in 1923 to Okinawan immigrants Genji and Tsuru Maeshiro in Waipahu, O'ahu. While still quite young, she and her family left the sugar plantation for Kunia where they cultivated pineapple. Later, they moved to Wai'anae Plantation where she attended school until the ninth grade.

With the death of her father prior to World War II, Beatrice's education ended and her work life in the restaurant trade began. She was hired as a waitress at Frankie's Café, a Honolulu restaurant owned in part by Gentaro Kaneshiro. At Frankie's, she became acquainted with Gentaro's half-brother, Fred Toshio Kaneshiro, whom she married in 1942.

In 1941, the Kaneshiros opened Columbia Inn on Beretania Street. From 1941 through the mid-1980s, except for some years spent caring for three young sons, Beatrice Kaneshiro worked in various capacities at the family-run restaurant.

Widowed since 1981 and retired a few years after the selling of Columbia Inn in the mid-1980s, Beatrice Kaneshiro maintains an active life in Honolulu.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Beatrice Kaneshiro (BK)

Honolulu, O'ahu

September 5, 2002

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Beatrice Kaneshiro at her home in Honolulu, O'ahu on September 5, 2002. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, Mrs. Kaneshiro, we're going to start the interview, and the first question I want to ask is when and where you were born?

BK: I was born in Waipahu.

MK: And what year?

BK: Nineteen twenty-three.

MK: What number child were you in your family?

BK: Fourth.

MK: How many children were there all together?

BK: We had eight in the family.

MK: What were your parents' names?

BK: Genji and Tsuru Miyashiro.

MK: What village did they come from in Okinawa?

BK: Kadena, Chatan.

MK: When your parents came from Okinawa, what kind of work did they do?

BK: They did plantation work.

MK: What plantations did they work on?

BK: First was Waipahu plantation, then they went to Wai'anae plantation and they stayed there until my father died.

MK: About when did your father pass away?

BK: In May 1941, just before the war [World War II].

MK: After your father passed away, what happened to the family?

BK: We stayed Wai‘anae. I think I came in town with my sister. I had two sisters and two brothers, and they stayed in Wai‘anae about two more years I think. Then they moved up to Pālolo.

MK: When the family moved into town, how was the family supported?

BK: My sisters worked, and we all helped out because my mother couldn’t work. She just did the gardening and [housework] you know. They stayed in Pālolo. We all pitched in and helped her.

MK: In terms of education, where did you go to school and how long?

BK: I went to Wai‘anae until ninth [grade] because my father died. I can’t come to Honolulu to go to more schooling, so I had to go to work and help her [BK’s mother]. My brothers and sisters were still young. My youngest brother, when my father died, he was like five years old, I think. I have other sisters, too. So, then we helped. I had two older sisters and my brother, older than me, we all helped. Worked together, we helped her.

MK: And then, your older sisters and your older brother, how much education were they able to get?

BK: I think they went up until eighth [grade]. Then my older sister got married, and then, well, the rest of us didn’t get married until after the war.

MK: Because you couldn’t come into town and continue your schooling, how did you feel?

BK: At first, I felt bad, but we cannot help that. The kids are all small, and my mother is there, and my father, 1941, he was ready to go to Japan—Okinawa rather. I don’t know what happened, but—oh, he died. May 6, he died, so he didn’t go. That’s the year of the war. Maybe in a way, good he didn’t go. He would’ve been stuck there.

MK: I was wondering, why was he planning to go to Japan at that time?

BK: I don’t know why. The thing is that he sent most of the money to Sumitomo Bank in Japan. That’s the reason why we lost some money, nothing coming back. He sent most of that. I don’t know if he wanted to stay there or what. We were all kids yet, so we don’t know.

MK: So 1941 was pretty hard.

BK: Yeah, was very hard for her, was real hard for my mom. The war started, people had to make some bomb shelters. Good thing we had a good neighbor. My mother had a good neighbor, they helped with all that thing, everything. Helped us out. Then, in ‘42 I got married to my husband. Then I still was helping.

MK: Your husband, what was his full name?

BK: His name is actually Frederick. They call him "Fred," but Frederick Toshio Kaneshiro. Our name, Beatrice and all our English [name] is all legal because during the war we have to have it legally. You know, because my name is only Sadako, Japanese name, we have to put in the English name. We went to the lawyer and had our names all legalized, put our English names in it, too.

MK: How did you choose your English names?

BK: My English name, my teacher gave it to me at Wai'anae. She was a *Haole* teacher, and then she gets hard time calling us Japanese names. She gave most of us Japanese people English names. She gave my name, "Beatrice." I said, "Okay."

MK: (Chuckles) How about your husband?

BK: I don't know about my husband, how did he get his name. People after that, when we came to Columbia Inn Kapi'olani, we have a lot of Caucasian people, all the news people [journalists] like that, they didn't call him "Fred," they call him "Tosh," T-O-S-H. That was his thing and everybody know him as that's his name, and they didn't know who was Fred. "Who's Fred?" And Gentaro [Tosh's older brother], they name him "Frank" maybe from Frankie's Café, that's why they named him Frank. During the wartime, everybody, just like they have to have English name, that's why we put in. Maybe when he became a citizen, he put his name "Frank," to legalize it to "Frank" because he signed as "Frank Gentaro." They thought he's named Frank.

And "Who's Fred?"

I said, "That's Tosh's name."

"Oh, I didn't know his name was Fred."

MK: (Laughs) And you were saying during the war you folks felt you had to put in English names. How come?

BK: I don't know. From Wai'anae the teachers were giving us the names, so we were using it without legalizing. But during the wartime we have to sign papers and things like that, so we said we better go to the lawyer. Those days, the lawyer, just to change the name was only fifty dollars. Nowadays it's big money. So we say, "Okay, let's all change it." We had it changed.

MK: You mentioned Frank Gentaro Kaneshiro. Explain to me his relationship to your husband.

BK: He is the oldest brother. The father is same, [Saburo] Kaneshiro, but they have different mothers because his [Gentaro's] mother was in Okinawa and he came here. Father get married [in Hawai'i] to this lady [Uto Uyehara], so she had Floyd, Oscar, [Elsie] Mitsu [Teruya] and Tosh. So that's how. But he [Gentaro Kaneshiro] took care of them, especially my husband because he's the youngest, he took care of him. He's just like our parent.

MK: How much of an age difference was there between Gentaro and your husband?

BK: I don't know. Let's see, it's quite a big difference, but I don't know exactly. Mitsu would know all those things because her age and her brother's age [were closer].

MK: And so, Gentaro, where did he come from?

BK: He came from Okinawa. He went to the Big Island, then they came up to Honolulu.

MK: I don't know how much you know, but what do you know about Gentaro's early work life?

BK: That, I don't know too much about. Where he worked, and what he did, and when he got married, and things like that. She knows most about it, my sister-in-law.

MK: Aunty Mitsu [Elsie Teruya].

BK: Aunty Mitsu.

MK: What would you know about Gentaro's involvement in the restaurant business before the Columbia Inn was opened?

BK: I heard he worked at American Café as a waiter, and then he learned the business. And then, he and Mr. Uyehara—there was a Mr. [Kamado] Uyehara—they opened Frankie's Café. That's how he was the part-owner of Frankie's Café. Then my husband was working there, I met him there. I worked there, too. He said, "Gee, I think he should open a restaurant for Tosh." So he hunt around and he found this place. It was a paint shop, sign shop, you called it. They make sign, and get painting, and this and that. Then, they build that thing. We worked over there. That was just before the war.

MK: You mentioned that Gentaro had a restaurant called Frankie's Café, where was this Frankie's Café located?

BK: You know where, next to the newspaper building, it's a plaza—Kawaiaha'o Plaza. That's right there on the corner. That was the restaurant there [at 619 S. King Street]. They had some rooming house and things like that there. After we moved from there, I think Mr. Uyehara was still working over there and then he sold his place to another, Kauhane Bar, or something. They sold it. Then, Servco took over there. Servco first moved over there, and then they came down, they bought the Columbia Inn, too.

MK: This Frankie's Café, try describe for me what the outside and inside looked like.

BK: There's a picture there, we had it displayed. It's the inside. It was just ordinary, nothing fancy. Those days, not too many fancy restaurants. They just sell food, that's all.

MK: How many tables did they have?

BK: They have quite a bit of tables. It's not a hole-in-the-wall type, it was really a lot of booths. They had a counter. And then I think they used to sell beer. Just the beer, and the counter, and had a lot of booths around, too, so it was pretty big.

MK: And how many employees did Gentaro have? Because he had you, your husband.

BK: Oh, we had about. . . . Gee, I think Mitsu would know more about it, I just worked there a short time. Then we moved down [to Columbia Inn]. They said, "You have to go down there and work." I wasn't married yet, you know, but I went down to help. So we all went down there to open up.

MK: At this Frankie's Café, I don't know if you remember, but what type of food did . . .

- BK: American food, regular breakfast, lunch, and dinner. They didn't open too late, maybe nine o'clock or ten o'clock. A lot of these restaurants way back, small restaurant, they never used to open too late, not like now. People eat early and go to bed early, I guess. It was good sized.
- MK: Besides owning the restaurant, what did Gentaro do at the restaurant?
- BK: He used to be the front man. His partner [Kamado Uyebara] used to be the back. Even if we came to Columbia Inn at Beretania where the paint shop is, he was the front man and Toshi was the back man, his cook.
- MK: When you say "front man" what does the front man do?
- BK: Front man greets the customers, waits. He waited on tables, too, clean the table, do everything, but he doesn't go in the back too much to tell the cooks what to do, the dishwasher what to do. He just do the people, he tell us what to do (chuckles).
- MK: When you worked at Frankie's Café, what was your job over there?
- BK: Waitress, and then whatever, we clean up. Those days, they used to have a split shift, we called it. You come in the morning, and then you go home, and then you come back. Some of them come just before lunch, they catch the lunch crowd and then they go home. Like some people, we come in the morning, the morning shift, you know, [when] the breakfast is over, we go home. Then, we all come back lunchtime. And then we through for the work. Some of them come lunchtime and then in-between they get off, and then they come for dinner. There's nothing in between. So I think still during the war we still used to have a split shift, but after that everybody worked straight [through].
- MK: So in those days when you folks had split shift, your job was primarily as a waitress. This may seem like an odd question, but in those days what did the waitress do? What was she responsible for?
- BK: Waiting on customers and then getting some of the side job things ready. Before breakfast, you get whatever you have to get—the coffee cups ready, get some papayas ready, things like that, whatever you have to do.
- MK: How did you get the job at Frankie's Café?
- BK: We used to go and eat—my sister and I used to go and eat over there. We used to live close by in a rooming house. My sister used to work another place, and we worked there, that's how we helped my mother, send the money home.
- MK: So you folks used to go eat at Frankie's Café?
- BK: Yeah. I don't know who said, Gentaro or Mr. [Kamado Uyebara]—we used to call him "Chief," you know, because he used to be the chief cook. So we used to call him "Chief." Maybe Gentaro told me to come, they need help, so come work. I went to work there. Those days, they hire anybody.

(Laughter)

We don't have experience, but they hire you.

MK: How much did you get paid?

BK: I think was thirty-five cents an hour. Because, when we [Columbia Inn] went to [Kapi'olani Boulevard], in '64, was still fifty cents and the old-timers used to have seventy-five cents. That's the reason why, I can imagine, the spaghetti dinner from soup to nuts used to be dollar fifteen cents.

MK: That was at which restaurant?

BK: This [was at] Kapi'olani [Boulevard]. Still. Then it started to go up. I think, most of us, we started at fifty cents.

MK: So when you started, you started at about thirty-five cents an hour?

BK: Frankie's Café, I think was twenty-five cents.

MK: Twenty-five cents an hour?

BK: Quarter, yeah. And people when they tip you, they tip you like nickel or dime. That's all you had. If you had a quarter, my golly, the guy is rich.

(Laughter)

You ask Aunty Mitsu, she will tell you more things like that because she worked there longer.

MK: What was the custom, those days, about tipping?

BK: They don't have. Most of them, they don't tip. Everybody is struggling, not like now, that you have to have like 15 percent or 10 percent. It's nothing like that. Not everybody tip, sometimes you had fifteen cents, you were really good. Then they go up. That was in the '40s, you know, '39 or '40s.

MK: You were saying that Frankie's Café served American foods—breakfast, lunch, and dinner. What was Frankie's Café known for? What was popular there in those days?

BK: I don't know what was popular. They just used to come and eat, I guess. Nothing special, those days, because they order this, order this, order this, like that.

MK: In those days, did the help also eat over there, too?

BK: Yeah, they make their own food for us. You just cannot eat from the menu. Most restaurants are not like that, even now. You can't eat—they'll just cook for you something or they tell you, "Eat this, this and this." You can eat this, and this, and this but not everything. Otherwise, they [employees] don't think, they'll eat the highest one and no profit.

MK: I was curious, when you were growing up and also as a young adult, what did you normally eat? American-type food or Okinawan food or Japanese food, what kind of food did you folks eat?

BK: American food. Not too much Okinawan food because we were already away—more in the veggie-type with a little meat. When we were in the country, too, we hardly had meat. We

get just a little meat and then we don't eat a whole steak. We had a little meat and we got lot of vegetables. Of course, we ate a lot of chicken because my mother used to raise chicken. Every house had chicken, so we had chicken and eggs coming out of your ears. Every now and then, they had some pigs, they raised pigs, too. You know when you in the country, when they killed the pig, everybody had some. We had some pork, and not too much meat. Sometimes we go to the market, buy the stew bone, and make big pot of stew. Things like that. Mostly, we call it stir-fry now, but that's what we used to eat.

MK: So *champururu* then?

BK: Yeah.

MK: How familiar were you with American food when you started waitressing?

BK: My sister and I used to go eat hamburger or cutlets like that, so we kind of knew what eating American food was about.

MK: How about the customs about where to put cutlery, where to put the silverware, where to put the plate?

BK: Yeah, they teach us that. How to serve. Gentaro is the one, he watches us, and then he teach us how to serve. But those days, people come to Frankie's Café, they're not particular. Not like we go to dinner house, we very seldom went to dinner house. They had some real classy dinner houses, but we very seldom went there. When we eat, pick just ordinary places.

MK: How was Gentaro as your boss at Frankie's?

BK: He was all right. He taught us a lot of things. Even when we moved to [Columbia Inn] Beretania Street, he taught us a lot, too.

MK: Besides how to set the table, what else did Gentaro teach you folks when you were at Frankie's?

BK: I guess it got natural how to put the food down and all the things. Actually, at first he just tell us to get your order. In fact, we didn't even have to write, we can remember. We just go over there, they tell you what they want, and you go to the kitchen, you yell in your order. And then you go and pick it up and bring it down to them. We didn't have to write it. We just get a paper and how much it is, you just write down how much, and just give it to them. Not like when we came [Columbia Inn at] Kapi'olani, we have to write it down because everybody was different. Even from Beretania Street we had a lot of Filipino customers, they eat the same old thing. During the payday time, the servicemen used to come. When the servicemen come, when the whole flock comes, about seven or eight of them, they used to eat our hamburger steak. So we all know everybody eating hamburger steak. But we came here [Columbia Inn on Kapi'olani Blvd.], then we had to write it down because get so many different kind of people. We had to learn to speak English all over. (Chuckles) That's what this girl Kay said, "Oh, I get so nervous, I don't know how to speak English," when they come because over there [Columbia Inn on Beretania Street] used to be Filipino [cliente].

MK: So like at Frankie's Cafe, what kind of customers did Gentaro have?

BK: All kinds. People live around there. So all kinds of people used to come. Japanese, Oriental very seldom used to eat those days. Because they all get a home, they cook at home. The wives cook at home, so not too many. So all the bachelors like that because used to get a rooming house next door, so they don't cook. They used to come in. The [Honolulu] Rapid Transit drivers, they used to come and eat.

MK: At Frankie's?

BK: Yeah. Because their station was nearby. The car barn used to be just up . . .

MK: At Alapa'i?

BK: Alapa'i [Street]. That's why they used to come and eat.

MK: So the HRT [Honolulu Rapid Transit] drivers, the boardinghouse bachelors, Filipinos . . .

BK: No, not too . . .

MK: Not at Frankie's?

BK: Not at Frankie's, it's over at [Columbia Inn on Beretania Street in] Chinatown. Even Chinatown, the Chinese people, not too much to come and eat. Very seldom people come and eat, curiosity, to come to Chinatown. But we used to keep our inside nice in Chinatown. My husband used to—till the time that we going to move away from there, he used to tell them to scrub the leg of the table. You know, it gets so dirty. They used to scrub that. When they look at outside, they come inside, oh, they used to be surprised because we used to keep it nice. He was particular, decorate the place, and he keep it really clean.

MK: How about at Frankie's? Was Frankie's also kept in that type of shape too, cleaning?

BK: That, I don't remember, it was okay. It's not really—when we have time we wipe here, wipe there.

MK: What was your husband Toshi's job at Frankie's?

BK: He used to cook. So that's the reason he went down there. When we first opened we had a man, he was a retired cook, Mr. Sonoda. He was a retired cook and he used to help us. He used to make very good stew and he learned from him. My husband used to make the pies. He used to make all the pies. Then when he [Mr. Sonoda] really retired, then he [Toshi] started to cook.

MK: Toshi at Gentaro's Frankie's Café, what was he cooking?

BK: As long as there's order, he cooks.

MK: What did you think of his cooking?

BK: It's okay, same thing, hamburger and cutlets. It's already packed, you only have to put it on the range and you cook it. They don't do it from scratch; it's prepared already. When they order it, you just put it on.

MK: Who did the preparation of the hamburgers and cutlets?

BK: They do it, in-between, they do it. That's why Mr. Uyehara was there, to teach them how to do it.

MK: So about how long were you at Frankie's Café?

BK: Not too long, about a year, I think.

MK: What did you think about waitressing?

BK: It wasn't so bad, because we cannot just go and look for jobs. But waitressing is good, you don't have to dress and you get little tips. You get the same—you get one shoes and two uniforms is good enough.

MK: Those days, what did you wear at Frankie's?

BK: We used to wear, I think it was a black skirt and a white top. That's what we used to wear at Columbia Inn, too. I don't quite remember, but everybody had a uniform.

MK: I know that in 1941 Columbia Inn opened. Can you tell me how this happened?

BK: Columbia Inn opened. Gentaro wanted to get a place for Toshi to run a place on his own. Because this one, Frankie's Café, was a partner[ship], it wasn't his own. He had a partner. So, he wanted to do his own. That's the reason why he was scouting around and then he found this place and he made it to a restaurant, and then he told us to go down there and help him. His brother was there, too, but the brother didn't care for it too much, so he left. Mitsu [Elsie Teruya] was there, his brother, myself. My sister helped us a little, too; we worked together. Then, we come busy, so we had more girls came. Friends of ours, they were home, so we asked them to come to work.

MK: If you can, tell me again the story of in whose name the business was put.

BK: Oh, under Toshi's name. In the legal form was his name. Gentaro's name wasn't on it. He was a silent partner. I don't know when, but maybe after he got his citizen[ship], maybe they put his name in. I don't know why he did that. Maybe he had a foresight. Then the war [World War II] started. Then he [i.e., Toshi] could run it, because was under his name. Gentaro was still alien then. He didn't get his citizen[ship] yet.

MK: I was curious about why is Columbia Inn called "Columbia Inn"?

BK: That, I don't know. That's Gentaro, I don't know. I don't know how he got that name.

MK: But you were saying something about he wanted it to be Colombia?

BK: Yeah, C-O-L-O, but everybody writes C-O-L-U, so he said, ah, might as well change it.

(Laughter)

Not one of them [food suppliers], when they put in the order, in the bill like that, it's not C-O-L-O—C-O-L-U. So we look. I said, "Look, look, all like this." No matter how much you tell them, they can't understand it, C-O-L-O. They don't know what is Colombia. So he said, "Never mind then, make it to Columbia." So they made it Columbia. (Chuckles)

MK: And this Columbia Inn, where was it located, the first one?

- BK: It was on [Beretania Street] the mid-block of Kamanuwai Lane and River Street. Right there. And I don't know when we moved to the corner.
- MK: At this original site, tell me what businesses were in that line of businesses that Columbia Inn was first in.
- BK: I only remember had a Golden Gate Bar, and then I don't know what happened in between. And there was a lane that goes to one housing over there, and then the corner had a drugstore, Tanseido Drug Store. That, I remember, and then it's River Street, all the produce people used to be there. On the opposite side, had a liquor store and had a laundry, and then had a restaurant over there called Manhattan Inn. And then, there's a lane there, the Kamanuwai Lane there. Kamanuwai Lane, in the lane had the Japanese theatre. Gee, what was the Japanese theatre's name? They have a actor going on and somebody on the side talking the story?
- MK: I can't think of the character right now.
- BK: Japanese used to have a lot like that, *shibai*-like, and then this man is on . . .
- MK: *Benshi*.
- BK: Yeah, *benshi*, he talks about the story and they all do the thing. Gee, what was the theatre's name? I forgot. After that, the Beretania Follies took over and they used to have burlesque shows like that, and then stars like that. In between [shows] the girls used to come and drink in the bar. You see the customers, they following them in to buy them drinks like that.
- MK: The girls from the . . .
- BK: Yeah, the follies, the chorus girls.
- MK: They would come to your restaurant, Columbia Inn?
- BK: Mm-hmm, because they have two shows like that, in between. Sometimes the stars used to come. They get one star every time, and they used to come sometime, but not all the time, the stars. So, stars like that, somebody come and buy their food and take it down.
- MK: So you folks were mid-block, and you had that building that you were in, and you were saying upstairs. What was . . .
- BK: Upstairs was, what do you call that? Comfort house or something? Just not too long after we moved there because I think after that, they closed it up, all those prostitute houses. So many around Honolulu, they closed it up. It was empty, so we leased it. We made it into a rooming house. Because had a lot of single people around, they needed rooms, so we made a rooming house.
- MK: So they had a prostitution business upstairs, then you had the Golden Gate Bar. Then you had . . .
- BK: The laundry, then we had the liquor store, then the corner, I think, was Manhattan Inn. And this, next to the Golden [Gate] Bar, I don't know what was next to the Golden [Gate] Bar. I know there was a lane that goes through. People used to live behind there. Then the corner, I remember, used to get the Tanseido Drug Store.

- MK: Japanese drugstore. And then, beyond Manhattan Inn, what was there?
- BK: There's a lane, that Kamanuwai Lane, and I don't know what business was in there, but after that it was a pool hall. I remember the pool hall. There was something else before then at the pool hall.
- MK: Across of your building, what was there?
- BK: Across had a lot of rooms, people rooming, tenants, they used to live there. The whole block like that. The stores down, and on top is people living upstairs.
- MK: If you had to ethnically describe that neighborhood, what kind of ethnic groups lived there?
- BK: They had Filipinos, they got Hawaiians. Not too many Japanese in that area, but if Japanese, it's the single guys. They come from [outer] island and they stay there. All along the way, almost to Iida, I think, used to get homes upstairs. All get. Now they get the *lei* stands on Smith Street—used to get homes, too, right across there, upstairs. Business was downstairs, upstairs was all homes, people's homes.
- MK: How about on the street? What kind of traffic was there on the street? Any buses or just cars?
- BK: The buses was only on King Street. King Street was the bus. Beretania Street didn't have no buses, was King Street. For a while they used to have jitney bus that runs Hotel Street, that's all. That was a different company. I don't know what company. But I remember the buses because those days the buses are trolley. Used to get the electrical things going, that was only on King Street. But I remember the open one, too. Before that, when we were at Frankie's, [Honolulu] Rapid Transit, you see the streetcars that open up?
- MK: Mm-hmm.
- BK: That's the one that was running. I think was ten cents or something like that to go in. Some people they don't even pay 'cause they just jump on from anywhere and just—you know, guys like that. We only go from the front, because them, they just get [on] and they just—when you slow down, they just jump over. And then after that, they had the regular trolley with the closed [not open-air body].
- MK: So on your street, on that Beretania Street . . .
- BK: No bus.
- MK: . . . just private cars.
- BK: Private cars.
- MK: And you know, this neighborhood, what did you think of it? Here you are, you came from Wai'anae, what did you think about this town area?
- BK: I didn't think anything of it. Whoever is there, we just get along, that's all. People said, "Oh, you don't want to go over there" this and that, but if you stay there all the time you're not scared. Not like now, it's so different. Those days, not too many crimes, you know. Not too many. I think the buses used to run till like maybe ten, maybe twelve o'clock, they're still around. Some of the girls, they get through at ten o'clock and they used to catch the

bus home, and they don't think nothing of it. It was really safe. Then, as the years go by, it came to be terrible. Now, you don't dare go out nighttime.

MK: But your time, when you folks were open . . .

BK: We never locked the house.

MK: You said that originally it was a sign shop, what did you folks have to do to get it ready into a restaurant?

BK: Build it from scratch. He went there, and I don't know who he contacted, and then he said that he got the place over there and then he asked Mr. [Gerald F.] Oki from Kraft Carpenter Shop, and then they build it up.

MK: When you're opening a new restaurant in a remodeled site, how did they get the financing? How did they manage?

BK: That's what my brother-in-law [Frank Gentaro Kaneshiro] did, but I don't know how he did it. That's why he had—my husband didn't have any money—he had the money. And he did the financing, the financing part he took over. He build it to tell him, to us, so we worked. He build it up. Luckily we were busy from the start, when we opened.

MK: And that restaurant was it on leasehold property, were you renting the property?

BK: I think we were renting it. Those days I don't think they had too many [fee simple]. They used to rent that property. I don't know if that was Mr. Wong, he used to be a very nice man. In fact, I remember I think it was him because I remember when stevedores went [on] strike. We used to get a lot of stevedores coming to eat, so we didn't have them [during the strike]. In fact, he lowered the rent. Those days, the landlord was really nice. We were month to month, I'm not too sure about that. And, Mr. Wong was really nice about it. I know he told me, "Don't worry" because he knows was slow.

MK: In those days, when Columbia Inn opened, you were telling me that it didn't open on the day that it was supposed to open, what happened?

BK: Because Mr. Oki had some men that working for him, they weren't citizens, they were aliens. Okay? So, this man used to do all those counter stool, and the stool wasn't ready. He couldn't come in. And then the war started with Japan, all the aliens were frozen, they cannot go to work. So then, after a while they just opened up and then he fixed it. So we were supposed to open on the 10th. The day of the 7th, my sister-in-law, my brother-in-law, and I, we were washing the glasses and putting all on the shelf getting ready because that was the 7th and we going open on the 10th. This man was working on the stools. And then, we were closed, but the MP [military police] opened the door and they said, "Tell every serviceman to report back to the base." They keep telling us that. We weren't open, but they know it was a restaurant. We had it closed, but they opened the door and they said to tell every serviceman to report to the base. That's why they going around, because everybody's in town, and they're in the restaurant, they're eating, or whatever. So that's when my brother-in-law, Gentaro, was in the hospital and my husband was visiting him. My younger—the other brother-in-law, they used to live on Miller Street. It's near the Queen's Hospital. People came with ambulance, and people run over there, all those people hurt and everything coming. The wife was seeing that over there and she got scared, and she called him to come home, my sister-in-law. I couldn't go home because I cannot lock the place, I have to wait for my husband to come back. At that time I wasn't married, he

have to come back. But then, the two of them left, I was in there and I had the door closed. Then he [BK's husband] came, and they lock up the place, and went home.

MK: You mentioned that Gentaro was in the hospital at that time?

BK: I don't know what was really wrong with him, but he was in there. But only for a short while.

MK: That was not a good time.

BK: It wasn't. Oh, was hectic, wartime. Then, we have to make blackout. I don't know—not too long though, but then we have to pass—in the early morning—we have to pass by the governor's place?

MK: Yes, that's Washington [Place].

BK: Miller Lane. We have to pass over there, Beretania Street, to go to work. The two guards used to stop us all the time. You have to identify yourself, and then they let us go.

MK: I'm going to just switch the tape over, okay? Hold on.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: This is the continuation of the interview and we're just into the World War II period when the restaurant first opened. So, because the war started and your husband-to-be and your brother-in-law-to-be were opening this business then . . .

BK: . . . Getting ready.

MK: What were their feelings about war having started?

BK: We didn't know anything. We didn't even feel it. We said, "Gee, is it real?" I heard Gentaro was saying afterwards, Toshi was visiting him and they could hear those bombing. Other patients and they, all talk to each other. And somebody said, "Wow, seems like real." Usually, used to have a lot of practicing. They say, "Ey, this is just like real." They didn't even know. Nobody put on their radio. They didn't even know if that's real until he came back. It was real, so we all have to close and go home. We couldn't open for a while. And then, they released them, and I guess, and then they fix it up. On the 20th we opened it.

MK: So, because war had started, how was the restaurant affected in its opening? Was the restaurant able to get its supplies?

BK: It was pretty hard, but we got some and we were busy. The best thing was that a lot of serviceman came to eat because there's not too many restaurants then. They were really nice to us about it. Only one or two of them [were not nice]—had this gal, she always talk Japanese. The guy [serviceman], used to say, "Speak English." He used to tell us. Even Gentaro used to tell us, "Speak English." He had the hardest time. Just one or two [troublemakers], but most of them [customers] were really nice to us. It wasn't hostile or anything like that, they just want to eat and go. They used to tip us well because they don't

know if they're going to live or not so might as well give us the money (chuckles). You know, in the pocket, they get the money, all crumpled—you sweep the floor, you always find money. Money on the floor because they take it out, they drop it.

So then, my sisters were there; my parents were living in Wai'anāe. Every week we used to go there. We used to close one day, you see. So the night before, we hurry up, clean up, and then we go before dark, because we cannot put on the light to go. We used to go there. We used to buy all kinds of things for the kids, and then bring all the tips that we made, the cupful of money, we used to give it to them for their lunch or things like that, whatever they need. Every week we used to take, my sister and I, used to. She used to work there. We used to give them. After a while, we buy package of candies and whatnot. Before we go by Nānākuli, I think, this guy that watches—I don't know what they had over there—there's a guard there and we used to give him a whole package full of candy. Every Tuesday, get people waiting, we used to pack all the things in, buy all the candies and just bring it to them. They don't think nothing of it. They just eat it. Because they could think, "Gee, these Japanese, they going to poison me or not," but, no, they really appreciated that. That's what we used to do all the time, and then they lifted [security checks] after a while.

MK: You were mentioning that at the Columbia Inn, originally you were working there, who else was working there?

BK: We started with my brother-in-law, Gentaro, and my sister [-in-law] Mitsu, myself, my sister, and my cousin used to stay with my sister so she helped out. After that we had another girl that, I think was Toshi's second cousin or something. She used to work somewhere else and she came to help us because we got busy, we needed help. Still, we had several more, you know. We had about ten girls. We started with only maybe five of us, but it was so busy, so we had to get more girls. It was non-stop during the wartime.

MK: Those days, since you folks are related, you're going to marry Toshi, you had the sister, another sister, cousins, how were you guys paid? You know, because you're family.

BK: No, they give us the regular rate. Everybody had the regular rate. Those days, Gentaro will give us cash in a little pay envelope. That's how they used to pay, we never used to have check. We never know what is check, they used to give us in a little small pay envelope. They write down how much an hour and everybody used to get their [pay], and then the tip is your own. I don't think we applied for tax then, about that. I don't know how we did on that one.

MK: And then, what was the pay rate for you folks?

BK: At that time, was twenty-five cents [an hour], I think.

MK: That was about the going rate for waitresses.

BK: Yeah.

MK: Who did the cooking and the cleaning? Any other workers?

BK: We had dishwashers, we had helpers, we had this Mr. Sonoda cook, and my husband was there. We had another helper, I think, in the kitchen.

MK: What were their pay rates?

- BK: I don't know how the cook's pay rate was, or the dishwashers'. We had a couple dishwashers—kids, they used to go to school, and they used to wash dishes. All those days, too, because most of the kids used to work, those days, for schooling.
- MK: In those days, how did you find workers for Columbia Inn?
- BK: People used to come and ask if you need help, or word of mouth. Like here, we used to advertise, but then I don't think we advertised.
- MK: When Columbia Inn was starting, how did you folks choose the workers? How did you decide who you're going to hire?
- BK: We just look at them. If they don't have experience, they tell you they don't have experience, and we teach them, but then they get less. But, we teach them. Those days, people they come and work, they're so *akamai* that they can catch on fast. When he came over there [Kapi'olani Blvd.], I used to teach all the young kids. They can do the computer real fast, but they don't know how to wait on them fast. That's the difference. But when we used to get them, we just look at them and say, "Okay, try." We used to let everybody try, if they can do it, they do it. If they can't, they can't.
- MK: I know you said that at Frankie's Café you used to wear uniform, black skirt, white top.
- BK: Columbia Inn was like that, too. That's what most people used to wear like that, it's easy. You just had maybe you get only one skirt, and two blouses, you can work with it.
- MK: Who would supply it, the clothes?
- BK: Well, Kapi'olani restaurant supplies, but those days we used to have our own. Either that they get or we buy. If they buy the uniform, we buy it from there.
- MK: I know, earlier, you said that at Frankie's Café it was split shift. How about at Columbia Inn?
- BK: At Columbia Inn, too, we had split shift, but then got so busy. And sometimes, the split shift, they don't show up. They're so tired they don't want to come back. So we said, "Ah let them work straight, it's easier that way." Then we started to be. . . . Most places were split shift. Now, they don't know what is split shift.
- MK: So it wasn't because of a government workers regulation or anything that the shift was made to continue a shift?
- BK: Maybe, I'm not too sure about that. And for convenience, too, I think.
- MK: Convenience and just having the worker there all the way through.
- BK: And then in-between, we were busy, too. During the wartime, in-between was busy. But other places like that, like even now, the Japanese places, you go and eat lunch, you don't have nothing until dinner. So they have to close the place up. So whoever work, I don't know if they split or—I don't know how they do that.
- MK: And then when Columbia Inn opened, at least during the war years, what were the hours like?

- BK: We never used to work eight, we used to work ten hours, I think. Everybody used to work about ten hours during the day, and then I think there came the regulation that you have to work eight hours. Then, we worked eight hours.
- MK: The restaurant itself, from what time to what time was Columbia Inn open?
- BK: During the wartime we open at six [AM] and then we used to close at six or six-thirty [PM], because it's blackout now. But after a while, we didn't have [blackout] . . . Then gradually we started to open till ten [PM], gradually.
- MK: In those days, what kind of foods did Columbia Inn specialize in?
- BK: Regular.
- MK: American.
- BK: American food, no Japanese food. Because Japanese food, they go to Japanese place.
- MK: You mentioned that a lot of servicemen would come. What would servicemen buy all the time?
- BK: Oh, they eat lots. You should see them eat when they come breakfast because on the ship, they said they give the powdered eggs. When you order, normally you order ham and eggs, like two eggs, right? They used to order six. That's almost triple order and they used to eat it all. And milk by the gallon, too, because they don't have good milk. They used to eat. We were only food, we didn't have liquor then. When we moved to that corner, then we got liquor license, we had a bar. Columbia Inn went on the corner, then we had a bar.
- MK: Originally, though, it was just food and soft drinks, milk, and coffee, that sort of thing.
- BK: Just regular restaurant, fountain, we have . . .
- MK: You mentioned that they would order six eggs, and then they have their meat, right?
- BK: Yeah.
- MK: What did you folks serve for starch then with that?
- BK: They always used to [order]—either French fries or hash brown. They used to eat, wow. I said, "You sure?" They say, yeah. They say they don't eat fresh egg, they eat powdered egg, so they come. Most people, when they come on shore like that, they know Columbia Inn. The same people used to come, most of them, even from [Fort] Shafter and Schofield [Barracks] like that. Same service people come in, so you get to know them.
- MK: For breakfast they would come for regular breakfast foods.
- BK: As soon as they come on shore, they go out and they come back, they come.
- MK: How about lunch and dinner, what kind of things did people order?
- BK: Lunch, dinner, they used to eat hamburger, hamburger steak, cutlet. The local people used to eat stews and spaghetti, like that. The servicemen people, they used to eat a lot of meat.

MK: Like Columbia Inn-Kapi'olani is kind of known for it's cutlet, yeah?

BK: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: Was the cutlet that was served at the original Columbia Inn the same type?

BK: The Kapi'olani one, this fellow used to cook, they used to deep fat that, but over there [original Columbia Inn] it was on the range. It's already breaded. They put it in there, but normally they put it on the range. That's how old Columbia Inn at that time, Beretania Street, used to do. Those days, used to cook it like that just on the range, the cutlet, it's not deep fat. I don't know who started the deep fat over here, but they used to cook it. It was just that we busy, I think, easier. Today it's all deep fat. You go up [to the Columbia Inn,] Kaimukī one, it's deep fat.

MK: So Columbia Inn nowadays is known for its cutlet, "broke-da-mouth" stew, those things.

BK: Yeah, "broke-da-mouth" stew was Kapi'olani. We had an award for that. They had some kind of stew thing going on, and then they made that thing.

MK: But that stew recipe is not one that started from the original Columbia Inn?

BK: Our chef at Kapi'olani was my brother-in-law. The father [Harry Seigi Uehara] used to own Evergreen. That father still did own Evergreen. And they had another son, too, but the father was pretty hard, I think. So Toshi used to tell the father, "You better watch out, I'm going to take George." And he did, George [Uehara] came to us anyway. He was married to my sister. My sister is the youngest in the family, but she died the first about just when I retired, about five, almost six years ago.

MK: So the difference in the food at the original Columbia Inn and the one at Kapi'olani is due to the cook.

BK: Yeah, really different. Because George, he was a good chef. He used to make a lot of good things.

MK: So the original Columbia Inn, what was it noted for? If someone thought Columbia Inn, you go there for . . .

BK: Not too many local come every day. We used to have lots of—what do you call these girls now? They call them the taxi dancers?

MK: Yeah, taxi dancers.

BK: They used to have a lot of girls and the Filipinos used to bring them in and they used to eat lots of steak because they're going to treat. (MK chuckles.) They eat steak, pork chop, fried chicken. (Chuckles)

But the normal servicemen used to come and eat cutlets, hamburger steak, and spaghetti, that's about it. Sometimes they used to make pork tofu like that, so we get. The regular local people like to eat that, they used to come. But the Kapi'olani one we had so many different kinds because George used to do all that.

MK: You know, like the Columbia Inn at Kapi'olani always had the complete meal. You get everything from the salad . . .

- BK: Mm-hmm. Soup to . . .
- MK: . . . the soup, the rolls, the entrée with the starch, the veggies, . . .
- BK: And then, drinks.
- MK: Then you have your drinks and a choice of dessert. How about the original Columbia Inn?
- BK: They used to do that, too. A lot of places used to do that. They call it “soup to nuts.” A lot of restaurants was like that.
- MK: So it was set.
- BK: Yeah, set. Then, they cannot raise it up so much all the time. In fact, some people, when they look at it, they like the salad, but some people don’t care for the fruit cup, they like the soup, so we cut that out. Less expense on that, so we don’t have to raise. So we cut that out. So he look at it, all those things. Then we started to make partially à la carte. À la carte you only take the entrée, you pay for one, and then the rest is separate.
- MK: When you go back to the original Columbia Inn, if you wanted to order the most expensive item, how expensive was that?
- BK: The steak, they used to order the steak, was maybe two dollars, or two dollars fifty. When we had the first Columbia Inn, we didn’t have any bar. The next Columbia Inn, when we moved to the corner, we had a bar. They used to order rib steak for *pūpū* like, and the thing cost two dollars and it used to go out like hotcakes. It was so good, too, the rib steak was so good because the meat was really good then. I guess, those days the meat was cheap.
- MK: Those days, where did you folks get all your provisions from? The meat, the vegetables, fish?
- BK: I think C.Q. Yee Hop & Co., we used to get the meat from. I don’t know where—must have got the produce store, yeah, that vegetable.
- MK: River Street.
- BK: Yeah.
- MK: And then the canned goods would come from. . . .
- BK: Shimaya [Shōten] like that. We used to use Shimaya, too. In fact, even up Kapi‘olani we used to use Shimaya because a friend of my brother-in-law used to deliver that for the longest time from Shimaya.
- MK: And then, you know, because it was wartime, were there limits placed on how much you folks could get?
- BK: Yeah. At first they had, but then, I think, gradually they brought it in. At first they had limits, so we had to watch. Certain time, we don’t have, we cannot make things.
- MK: And then, how about the Office of Price Administration [OPA], how did they affect the prices?

BK: Gee, I don't know about those things because my brother-in-law took care all those things. Gentaro is the one that's the front man, he takes care all those things.

MK: Even if Gentaro was an immigrant from Japan, he could handle?

BK: Oh yes. Oh, he knows. But we had a bookkeeper, we go to the CPA [certified public accountant], then they watch our books. But he knows, sometimes he know more than the CPA.

MK: And then, your husband or your husband-to-be at that time—he was already a husband from '42—what was his role in the early Columbia Inn?

BK: He is the one that order something for the kitchen, all the food things, meat things, like that.

MK: Was he also in the kitchen cooking?

BK: Oh yes, yes. He was the chef for a long time until, I guess, Gentaro went out. He wasn't really working, so my husband had to go in the front. He takes care of the front, we call them the "front man," they take care the front. Then, we had our chef. Before we moved from Beretania Street, my brother-in-law that was going to be the chef, he worked there one month, so he get to know how to do, what to do. Then, when we came Kapi'olani, then he was our chef.

MK: So prior to that, there was Mr. Sonoda and your husband?

BK: Mm-hmm [yes]. My husband was his helper, he learned from him. And then when Mr. Sonoda really retired, then he took over.

MK: Where did Mr. Sonoda originally come from?

BK: That, I don't know. I heard he was a very good chef somewhere in Waikīkī, I'm not too sure. He was a kind of elderly man, you know. He retired from there. I don't know, Gentaro found him, so he told us that we're going to open, so come and help us. So he came. I only remember him as kind of elderly and not moving fast but his food was so good. I can remember his pies, too, was so delicious. That's why we learn from him. My husband used to make all the pies.

MK: What kind of pies did your husband make?

BK: He used to make pumpkin, apple, custard, and his banana pie, everybody raved about it. He tried to make one day, he couldn't, he forgot. Everybody raved about his banana pie. They used to make them nine inch, those days. Today they rave about banana pie at Flamingo Kapi'olani, but his one was really good, too. Doesn't get black.

MK: Like those pies, did the recipes for those pies also transfer to Columbia Inn-Kapi'olani?

BK: I don't think we made banana pie too much, because we had another baker and he used to bake different things. Not from there.

MK: I was wondering, at the old Columbia Inn, did you folks have like jukeboxes or radio?

BK: Yes, yes, yes.

MK: What did you have?

BK: Jukebox. Every place had jukebox.

MK: How did you get one?

BK: A Mr. Okimoto used to have a place. I remember my older brother used to work for him. You know, those days—we were talking about it not too long ago—the jukebox, every week, he comes and he takes all the coins out, and then they sit in one of the booths, not in the back, just in the booth, and counting the money. Split, this for you, this for you, and then they throw 'em in the trunk and go. Nobody followed them. You cannot do that today. People are looking. So is the cigarette machine, they come, and then they take all the money out, they count it right there on the booth. Nobody followed them. They can see them throw the rest of the money they counted . . .

MK: In the trunk?

BK: . . . in the trunk, and they go. They go to the next one, and the next one, like that.

MK: How did it work? There's a company that owns?

BK: The company owns the machine and the money is fifty-fifty, I think. Because they put it in and that's their jukebox, but they're using it at my place, so it's fifty-fifty. They open that thing, they take all the coins out, they count it. I can just see them putting over there, "this is yours, this is yours," and then just throw it in the trunk.

MK: Same thing with the cigarette machine? What other machines did you have?

BK: Just that two.

MK: Just those two. The jukeboxes, would they be updated with different songs?

BK: Mm-hmm. They come.

MK: How often would he do that?

BK: If it's popular, they just leave it on. If not, the new ones come in, then they put in.

MK: How would he know which ones is popular or not?

BK: I guess he would know, that's his job. Now, they don't have it.

MK: So, your patrons would come in and they would put money into the jukebox. And was it just for listening or for dancing?

BK: No, for listening only. Dancing is another thing, now, you have to get license for that. You cannot dance. Maybe there's one or two guys would just dance over there a little while, that's it. No contact dancing.

MK: What kind of songs did they have? All American? Japanese?

- BK: American. After a while, they had Japanese songs, too, but mostly it's American. Then, they used to have one jukebox and they put it in. Somehow, for a while, every booth had one, you don't have to walk to that place. I don't know when it stopped.
- MK: So the original Columbia Inn had those individual ones, too?
- BK: No, we just had—because it's too much space took them—we just had one and it goes over there. And then they would really play because they ask waitress, "Play certain song for us, okay?" and they used to play. "What song you want?" and they put the money in, and play. It was fun. Sometimes when the girl want to learn that song, she play it over and over. (Laughs)
- MK: So the restaurant was a lively place, then, yeah?
- BK: Yeah, it was a lively place.
- MK: Especially during the war, the servicemen. And you mentioned earlier that you have the burlesque show, you had the theatre before that, you have the prostitution house upstairs, how did having these type of businesses around you affect your business?
- BK: Well, we were busy. And the girls that come only in the morning before they go up, they come and eat breakfast, and we never see them after that. There's a couple of ladies that were working there, they go and buy the food for them. They come downstairs, pick up the food, and take them up. You never see them after that. Some of them, you never see them. Only a few of them, you see them. They come and eat breakfast and they go. We never see them. So we don't even know if they're there or not.
- MK: I know that later on when you folks occupied the Manhattan Inn side, which would be about five or six years later than the original opening, you said that you folks had a bar.
- BK: Yeah, we had a bar. We got a liquor license, so we have to make a bar area. It was a nice bar. And we had bartenders.
- MK: Having a bar . . .
- BK: Over there we had to hire a bouncer, you call that.
- MK: I was just going to ask.
- BK: We had retired wrestlers, you know. Japanese man, mostly was Japanese. One was Hawaiian. Later, we had one Filipino fellow.
- MK: Who were these retired wrestlers that you hired?
- BK: One used to be Watanabe, that we know. And then, oh, I forgot their name. I know Watanabe. It wasn't really rough that you have to take them out like that. Then, we came over here [Kapi'olani Blvd.], we don't need any. They all behaved themselves.
- MK: How come you folks had to move to the Manhattan Inn site?
- BK: Because that was a little bigger than our smaller one. My brother-in-law wanted to get the liquor license. The original Columbia Inn was small, so we moved over there.

- MK: How much smaller was it? Was it a big difference in size?
- BK: Yeah, because otherwise we cannot have a bar area. You have to make the bar and then you have to get some booths, too, over there. You know the round table that I have over there?
- MK: Yeah.
- BK: They put that for us. From there we had it.
- MK: From the Manhattan Inn site, that's a real original?
- BK: Yeah, from there, and then we brought it to Kapi'olani. At first, I thought, "Gee, who's going to sit there," but the newsmen, they all sit there. They liked it.
- MK: And so, how big did Columbia Inn become when you folks moved to the Manhattan Inn site? How many tables?
- BK: The table itself is almost like the old ones, but then we had the bar side, too.
- MK: Was it separated?
- BK: No, it had a partition like because the bar side we get the booths, a partition on it.
- MK: So with the bar now, you needed a bouncer. And with the bar, what other new employees did you have to get?
- BK: We had to have cocktail waitresses, and we have to have bartenders or bartender.
- MK: How did the hours change?
- BK: Ours was already, they work straight.
- MK: How long was the Columbia Inn open with the bar then?
- BK: Two o'clock. First was one o'clock, then came two o'clock.
- MK: So, how long were your husband's working hours there?
- BK: They don't work that long. Somebody working during the day. And then we get the bouncer, then he have assistant manager, too, so he can close it up. We don't have to. He don't have to be there. When you have liquor license, you have to have management all the time. So we always give the management to couple assistants, so he [BK's husband] don't have to be there.
- MK: Who did he have as his assistant managers?
- BK: We had the bouncer, one of them. Always the bouncer, used to get assistant manager, also. And then, we had a couple of them so they get different shifts, too.
- MK: So now with the bar did the menu change in any way?
- BK: No, same. Only thing we add in that they can order *pūpū* on the side. But the thing is, when we had our liquor, it was much better because we have a bouncer, so we know no

characters come in. When we only had a restaurant, we don't have bouncers, so anybody can drink from the other bars and they can come in and eat, and they used to give us bad time. But if they know you get a bouncer, they behave because the guy going take them right out. So in a way, if you get liquor, you can get bouncer, it's better for everybody.

MK: I never thought of it that way. That makes sense.

BK: Because they're going to come and eat, but they drink at someplace, go over there, get bar, they don't have food. Those days, when you have bar, you don't have to have food. But now, you open a bar, you got to get food. You see, the difference. They drink over there, and they want to eat at Columbia Inn. They so drunk already and then they give us bad time. No bouncer there, it was hard. But, it's better you get liquor and you get bouncer. Once we knew this guy that worked Golden Gate, Charlie, we used to go call him.

MK: At least it was right next door, right?

BK: I used to, "Charlie, come and get your guys." (Chuckles)

MK: And those days, besides the servicemen, wartime you have the servicemen customers, after the war, what other customers did they have?

BK: The regular local people, and some of them still come to us. They used to come, too.

MK: When did you folks get married?

BK: In '42.

MK: How did you folks meet, just on the job, you and your husband?

BK: Mm-hmm. I think my sister-in-law introduced us, I think, I'm not sure.

MK: What did you think in the beginning?

BK: Well, I guess . . .

(Laughter)

MK: So you folks met and . . .

BK: Yeah, so we got married in '42. We got married before we went to that other Columbia Inn.

MK: And then eventually, you started having children. When did you have your children?

BK: Gene was born in '45, and then Dennis was '47, and Norman was '51.

MK: So you were working up until the time you became pregnant with Gene. And then you stopped working, and when did you return to work?

BK: I returned to work. . . . Columbia Inn was '64, so about maybe '62 or something like that. Just before we moved to Kapi'olani.

MK: How come you decided to come back to work?

BK: The kids were getting old already, and they needed my help, so I went down and help them out. I was cashiering. I hate cash.

(Laughter)

I rather walk around and do things. You stand one place, you get tired, it's really tiring, you know. I rather do other things, even you walk around it's much better. When you stand one place, you got to answer the phone, you got to talk to the customer, you got to collect the money, give them the right change. It's not easy. Just like cashiering is so easy job, not easy.

MK: And so, you started with Columbia Inn when they opened '41, and then you were working, and then you had your children, and you came back in '62. That's twenty, right? Columbia Inn was at the downtown site for like twenty years. What were the main differences from the beginning to that time you came back? What things really changed?

BK: Not too much changed, but when I went to Kapi'olani I cashiered for a while. After that, we hired a cashier. Then I was sort of all around—I help this person, I help this person like that. If the person don't come, I have to watch the counter. The counter is—we had how many—ten or twelve stools and we had to have two girls working. That was so busy, one girl cannot take care. Then, when the cashier have take-out order, then she give it to me and I run in the kitchen. Because she cannot leave—the cashier—cannot leave there, so if she wants to eat or go to the bathroom, then I watch the place for her and then go around. It's not easy. Now, I think only one cashier, sometimes the phone rings, rings, she's picking up the order because I'm not there. When I left, they said, "Oh—" Because I used to do all. Since I was a waitress, and a new girl come in to work, and [Columbia Inn] Kapi'olani is busy, I can see the person is stuck. She don't know what she's doing already. I can see that, as soon as I see that, I go over there and give her a hand. I pick up her things for her and I give her. And then, sometimes they tell, oh, they get nervous. I say, "No, she do that for you, lucky." They want to give me the tip, I say, "No, that's all for you, I'm just going to help you out." So she goes, and I can see the crowd come in like that, and they get table. Some people order odd orders and they get the hardest time to get the thing started, to finish it up. I can see that. As soon as I see the girl getting stuck, I go over and help. I used to do that. So when I retired the girl said, "Can you come only on Sundays?"

(Laughter)

I said, "No, I'm retired already." I feel bad, but I say no. Terry [Oshima], the Kyotaru manager, said, "Why don't you stay? You can work better than the others." I said, "I'm just as old as your mother you know." (MK laughs.)

She goes, "Oh."

MK: I was wondering, Columbia Inn later on had the reputation of being like a sport restaurant. When it was downtown, did it have that kind of clientele or reputation?

BK: No.

MK: So the sports bar restaurant came with Kapi'olani then?

BK: Although he [BK's husband] was a Dodgers fan since then, but the Filipinos care less about baseball. (Chuckles)

- MK: The downtown site when you had local clientele, many Filipinos.
- BK: Yeah, they used to come. Some of them, the salesman we deal with, they used to come and all that. Eagle Distributors, all those liquor distributors, they used to come at least once a week, like that.
- MK: Back at the Downtown Columbia Inn, what did you folks do to get people to come in? Advertising or word of mouth?
- BK: Word of mouth and advertising. We didn't advertise too much, but he did. Because like we came Kapi'olani, we advertise for the baseball. We get all the reporters that come in. They used to bring a lot of sports people over there, the managers bring them in. The midget guys used to come, too, the midget wrestlers. I tell you, they used to come, because the managers used to bring them in. We used to get a lot of *sumōtori* people that comes in, too. Jesse.
- MK: Kuhaulua.
- BK: Kuhaulua [Takamiyama]. He used to come all the time. In fact, he was good friend with Gene [BK's son]. When Gene went to Japan with Kyotaru Company, they took him, he told him, "Don't forget to come and see me at the stable." So he took the train, and he found the place, and he went over there. He said he met his wife. Then he said, "My wife give me the *kozukai*." He tells him that. Before then he told him that the Kyotaru Company wants him to come. And then he told Terry—they had plenty business then. He said, about ten of them, they hired, and they got together at one Kyotaru place. One of the cooks just came over there, Waimalu, and he was there, too. So he came. They didn't think that Gene would know him well, so they just, [out of] curiosity, came. Then he came over. The *sumōtori* in Japan is just like better than the movie star, popular. People were just milling around there. They came and went into his car, Gene said, he told him, "Hey Gene I have to go upstairs for something. Come, come, come up." That's why he went up with him. Something like a studio or something. Anyway he came down and they went down Kyotaru. People was just waiting to see him. And he sat there. Gene said he sat there and he [Takamiyama] told him his "father [BK's husband] and I was friends. And when I was going that *sumō*, I wanted to give up, but he tell me, 'No give up'." He used to come and meet him. He said, "Just like the papa was my friend, so this my friend."
- MK: Oh, it's a nice story, yeah?
- BK: Yeah. Gene said he went there. I said, "Did you go?"
- "I found the place and I went to see him, and then we brought him down, Kyotaru Company."
- But I don't know why Kyotaru Company went, but they just went broke. They did [expanded] too much. Too many, even Mainland, here, and all that thing, I don't know who was doing too much.
- MK: I think, today, I'm going to stop here, so that the next time I come we can get into the Columbia Inn-Kapi'olani.
- BK: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 40-7-2-02

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Beatrice Kaneshiro (BK)

Honolulu, O'ahu

September 11, 2002

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Beatrice Kaneshiro at her home in Honolulu, O'ahu on September 11, 2002. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, to continue the interview that we had from last week, if you could go back to the time when you folks had Columbia Inn in town.

BK: They call 'em the Chinatown.

MK: In Chinatown. When you look back from 1941 to 1964, that's over twenty years, yeah? And I know that there were some times when you weren't there because you were raising your boys. But, what did you see from the beginning to the time you folks left as changes in the food. What changes were there in the food served?

BK: In Chinatown the food from one end to the other, from the mid-block to the corner, it didn't change at all, except we had a bar. In the mid-block, we didn't have any bar, we were just restaurant. But the food, the chef, and everybody is same so the food was the same thing. And the customers are the same thing because we were only about a couple of stores away, in fact.

MK: From 1941 to 1964, when you look back and think about the people that worked at the restaurant, what changes were there in the workers, if any?

BK: When we came to Kapi'olani it was a little bigger, so we have to hire more. Most of the cooks were the same, they just came with us. Part of the waitresses were the same, they just came with us, but we have to hire different people because it was bigger. Then we had our twenty-four-hour service, so we have to have three shifts. But the food itself, a little change, a little better because our chef was my brother-in-law George Uyehara, [his] father used to own Evergreen Restaurant. So he was better chef than what we had regularly. He used to do a lot of different type of food.

MK: What types of dishes did Chef Uyehara come up with for Columbia Inn at Kapi'olani?

BK: So many dishes, different kind. Every time when he make a new dish, my husband just go around and tell them to try this, and it sells out. It was really busy when we first opened. That first month maybe, people are just looking around. But just typical American food.

MK: What were the most popular dishes at Columbia Inn-Kapi'olani?

BK: It's hard to say what was the popular dish because so many of the dishes goes about the same thing. The normal thing is we had the hamburger, spaghetti, cutlets, they used to make. The shrimp tempura was the most popular one, and who used to cook that is a Hawaiian lady and a Hawaiian fellow. They used to be the best. And then the shrimp tempura used to go out like hotcakes. We used to have onion rings, and they just pile up like that. People used to order the onion rings from the bar, so they had to cancel it out for a while because they couldn't keep it up. Well, I guess, the chefs say, the shrimp tempura, you have to have a light hand. If you just drop it in, it gets thick, the dough. That crinkle one, they spread it thin and make their own dough, the light dough, the Japanese. I think we had one of the best shrimp tempura. This lady named Eva, she used to do, and this fellow in the '90s, we have Duke, he used to do it. The two of them, Hawaiians, part-Hawaiians. They used to be the best—they get the light hand—used to do the best tempura. So, I guess the tempura, people used to come for. Even [well-known actor] Tom Selleck used to come for the tempura. He come and eat the tempura. Every time when he goes to Kawaiaha'o [church gymnasium] and play basketball or something like that, he used to come over and eat.

MK: I know that some people associate the beef stew and the cutlets with Columbia Inn.

BK: The beef stew was good because the chef made beef stew, by the time, Ricky. Then he entered the contest, so it's the "broke-da-mouth" stew, and he won it. And that was really, really popular, so they write down the "broke-da-mouth" stew. That was in Kapi'olani. We had a little better things and we had more things at Kapi'olani than we had at Downtown.

MK: How did you folks decide what to put onto your menu?

BK: That's the chef, we don't decide that. We don't tell them what to do, the chef. My husband never tell the chef, "Do this, do that." He let him handle the kitchen and he handle the front. The same thing with Gene.

MK: How did your husband find his cooks?

BK: We had this man named Shima [Seikichi Shimabukuro], he worked for us since we opened. But when we moved up here, I guess Shima, there was just so much he could do. Our chef, he was my brother-in-law, he came and asked that he wants to run the kitchen for him, my husband. He didn't want to take him because the father owned Evergreen, and he used to work there. So, he wanted be the chef, I guess, so he came to him and said, "Toshi, you go to Kapi'olani I'll run the kitchen for you." Fine, and that's how we got him.

MK: Because there's that family relation, was that good situation or not good situation?

BK: It was good situation because my husband never bother him. He do whatever he wants to do in the kitchen. Although he's the owner, but he take care the front, and "You take care the back." And then, they have meeting every so often, if he wants to iron out something, they get together. But he doesn't go there and say, "Hey, you're not doing something good." He never ordered him around, and that's how it's supposed to be. Otherwise, the chef's going to get real mad and he's going to quit.

MK: So you have this head chef, and how many assistant cooks were there?

BK: Oddles. Because we have, they call them the fry cooks, the assistant is one or two, and then we have pantry ladies. We have right behind, maybe one, two, three, four. One is the broiler. The broiler person broil the steak. The tempura oil is right there, so they make the tempura, and the broil the steak. The rest of them, one in the middle is the one that fry the things when they order cutlets, and liver, and things, you know, hamburger, fries. One on the side, is just like stew, scoop it in, because it's all ready. We used to have about one, two—four, I think. When we started was busy, and then after that it came down, so they get two.

MK: You mentioned that some of the waitresses came from Chinatown continued at Kapi'olani and some you had to hire new. What did you look for in a person when you were hiring waitresses? What made a waitress good?

BK: We asked them what experience they have, first of all. Some of them said they work here and there. Waitresses always work somewhere else, and they want to look another place, so they come, we hired them. Some of them says, "I never get experience," so I always tell them, "Why don't you go work for fountain or something, a small place. At least you know knowledge of food, how to serve, how to make, and then you come back." Some of them, even with the little experience, it's really good. You teach them and they can catch on real fast.

MK: What kinds of things did a waitress have to learn at Columbia Inn?

BK: Oh, the normal things like serving, greeting, and then appearance. Anywhere else, the employees got to be really pleasant.

MK: And how did you find these waitresses?

BK: Put in the paper, ads, and they come. They fill out application, and then from there on, either Gene or I look at it and then we call them in and we talk to them. We can see how much experience, where did they work, and all that.

MK: When you look back on your waitresses, how long did some of them stay?

BK: They stayed until they retired. Quite a bit of them stayed until they retired. They just stay on, most of them. We had really good waitresses. When my husband go to out of town like that, the thing running smoothly. Them, they all do their share. I don't know about now. While we were leaving, it was different already, the younger ones was different. When we started from the old Columbia Inn, move in here, the waitresses—all the workers were terrific. We had a lot of Japanese workers first, from Japan. We learned how to speak Okinawan language because they come from Okinawa, we hire. By the time we came Kapi'olani and they all retired, so Orientals didn't work too much, restaurants. They send the kids to school, so they don't want to work as a cook. Very seldom. So we had Filipinos working. There were some good Filipino kids working, dishwashers. They work in there. In fact, by the time Kyotaru took over was all Filipinos. Wherever you go now, you can find good workers.

MK: You mentioned in the early days you had women from Japan working, or Okinawa working, so you had to learn the Okinawan language. A lot of people say that many of these restaurants owned by Okinawan families, they all started other places, having worked at sort of like *minarai* or apprentice at other restaurants. At Columbia Inn, did you have people like that who kind of started over there, learned it, and went off?

BK: Yeah, well, they started as dishwasher. Men, like that, dishwasher, and every now and then they kind of help the cooks like that, and they learn to cook. Next thing you know, we promote him if they want to cook, they let him cook. During the wartime, we used to have a lot of kids that go to school, wash dishes, because they have to earn money. During the wartime, we used to open, I think, was nine o'clock or ten o'clock. We cannot open later, but when we came to Kapi'olani was twenty-four hours. In fact, before we came to Kapi'olani, Columbia Inn was twenty-four hours. Then we came up to Kapi'olani was twenty-four hours, so we have to have three shifts. Gene would know how many workers we had because he had a good memory of who is who, because when we have our Christmas party, he goes down the line and introduce everybody's name like that. I say, "Gee, how the heck he knows all the names?" They're Filipinos, you know.

MK: And then, because you had a twenty-four hour restaurant, how did you folks manage yourself and your husband?

BK: We don't work twenty-four hours, remember that. And everybody think that, "Oh you must be good cook."

I said, "We don't cook." We hired the cooks. We only hired them. So the thing is that we can, more or less, tell if they're really good or not, or trusting. In fact, they all trusting and they work hard. Either we stay there, or we not there, they work just as good. It's not like now, you got to watch them; otherwise, you don't know what they doing.

MK: So on a regular day, like yourself, how many hours did you spend at the restaurant?

BK: My husband used to spend longer hours, I used to spend regular, eight hours, or sometimes less. After my husband passed away, I used to go there not too much. When Kyotaru took over, I used to work only on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. I used to work during the daytime Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Six [AM] till two [PM], or six to three.

MK: That was helping with. . . ?

BK: I just on the floor. The floor person. We had a maitre d', a young man, but I used to help each girl, see what they doing. If they busy, then some of the kitchen things like they have to do, especially breakfast, they have to clean their own papaya, I used to do that for them so that they don't get stuck with other customers. All those jobs, we know. They looking for me all the time. Sometimes, too, I work harder than them because I cannot only help one girl, I have to help everybody. I used to watch the new ones. The old-timers, they know what to do already, so I used to watch the new ones. You have to make oatmeal, and this cook sometimes, they don't know how to make oatmeal. They make it so thick, so I used to tell them, "You got to put more water in it." and then check all those things.

And then, make for them the toast. The toast used to be in the front first, and I used to stand over, there and they just tell me, "toast" and I make it. That's the one, the girls get stuck on. See, they have to make their own. Everything, if hotcakes like that, it's easy, they just throw in the order and the cooks cook it, and then you just go pick it up. But some of the things, when they order, when they order boiled eggs, they have to open it up yourself or unshell it. So, when they doing that thing, they looking for me because if they're going to do that, they cannot handle the next one. So, I used to see that thing, I used to help them out on that thing.

MK: So you were like an extra hand.

BK: Extra hand on that thing. And then, sometimes I bring the entrée out for them. So it's easier, so they can go to the next one and next one.

MK: Going back a little bit, I was wondering why is it that you folks stopped the Columbia Inn in Chinatown?

BK: We had to move from there. Redevelopment over there, so everybody had to move from there. That's the reason why we were looking for a place to go.

MK: How much notice did you folks have?

BK: We had quite a bit of notice, I think. We were looking, we try here, we try there. Then, we didn't know the Times [Grill] was on sale. So I guess somebody found out that we were looking for a place to move from there. So, this fellow came in and asked us, "Why don't you come Times?" We didn't know they were for sale.

MK: At that time, who owned the Times Grill?

BK: They had so many owners. I know one was Higa, that's about it. I get about four or five, I think. They said they were doing good, this man said, but they get too many owners. The profit doesn't go too far.

MK: What other choices did you folks have besides the Times location?

BK: Well, I think that was the best because we were in Chinatown, the bright lights and people walking around. Kaka'ako, certain area we go down there, it's kind of dark in the night. Ten o'clock, nobody walking around, it's kind of scary. So we said we don't want there. But Times because the newspaper is running twenty-four hours, people are milling around. When they say that, we jump into that. One bowling alley on King Street used to have one [space], but the lease was, I think, it's just a short lease. So we said, "Oh no, that's not too good."

MK: How did you feel having to leave Chinatown and start up at a new location?

BK: I think was for the better, I thought. Different type of customers. But we were actually forced to move. Everybody was.

MK: And then, when you folks bought Times Grill, what did you folks have to do to get it ready to become Columbia Inn?

BK: We re-do it. It wasn't the same way. What we did was, the shell, the building is there, but the inside is all different when you look at it now.

MK: So when you folks got Times Grill, you remodeled the whole interior. How about the kitchen side, too?

BK: Everything.

MK: Everything. So how did you folks manage that? How did you do it?

BK: They did. I don't know about that area.

MK: So Tosh did it?

BK: And Gentaro was there, too.

MK: When you folks moved to that location, why is it that you kept the old Columbia Inn name?

BK: We have to keep it. You're known as Columbia Inn. You cannot change, different name, we're already with Columbia Inn.

MK: So, you brought over the name. When you folks moved, besides having to hire more people and besides having to remodel, did you folks make any other changes in your operation when you moved to Kapi'olani?

BK: No, same thing. It's just that we had more workers.

MK: Later on, now you're at Kapi'olani, how did you and Tosh manage because you have a family of three kids and both of you are involved in the business. How did you folks manage day to day?

BK: He worked during the day, I worked during the night. So, I go home when the kids are going to school. I get home before eight, anyway. Fortunately, my three boys was good. They didn't get into any trouble like that. Gene was really good about that, he put them in line like that. We managed.

MK: Later on, Columbia Inn became known as a sports restaurant. How did that happen?

BK: Because [BK's husband, Tosh Kaneshiro] he's a Dodgers fan and people used to come around. The newspaper guys found out about that, and that's how we got to be sports fan. Harry Lyons [newspaper cartoonist] was a Dodgers fan, too. Some other people was really Dodgers fan. I think Dave Donnelly [columnist] was Dodgers fan, too. So we get to know all of them.

MK: How did that photo collection of celebrities and sports personalities develop?

BK: Like I said, they used to bring the pictures, the managers, the sports people used to bring, "Hey, you want a picture of this?" and he used to bring it. We had a different kind of picture in the bar area, we had seascape because we know this fellow Nobu Inouye, he's a seascape artist. He used to have his seascape in one bar in Kapi'olani. My husband happened to go there and he asked somebody, "The seascape, is that for sale?"

He said, "Yeah."

So he had about maybe seven, eight, or something like that. He said that, "If it's for sale, I want to buy it. How much?"

Then he said, "You can have that for a thousand dollars."

So he said, "Okay, I'll buy it." This Nobu Inouye said he was so flabbergasted—he's tell me this now—everybody come over there, "I want to buy the seascape," but they only say that and never buy it.

My husband say, "I want to buy it."

So he say, "Oh, thousand dollars," like that.

So he said, "Okay." So he picked it up and he bought it. He was so flabbergasted because he said nobody bought it like that. They say, "I'm going to buy it," but they never did. That's how they came friends, and he started to come to our bar all the time. He was a good seascape artist. That's how we had all seascape pictures around.

I saw that [celebrity/sports photo] in the office I said, "Oh, get so many pictures like that, why don't you frame it and put it up."

He said, "Yeah, I think so." So that's when he bought the whole case of frames, then he started to put it up. Then more people brought it. Some of them, when they come, he always had a camera. He used to take pictures of them. Even the customer, regular customers, he take picture of them, he put it up.

He used to support the Boy Scouts [of America]. Boy Scouts when they come sixteen, they have their badge, right? So he used to buy the badge for the Eagle Scout, rather. When they come Eagle Scout, he used to send them a gift certificate. I remember writing it. At first, he used to see in the newspaper, "Oh, this kid became an Eagle Scout so I better send him a gift certificate." So he took it down, and I used to send it. He get a gift certificate, we used to send it. At that time, was only five dollars. So he says, "Okay." He might miss some because some don't come in the paper. I don't know where he went to get [a list], he tell them, "Every kid who get Eagle Scout, send me the whole list." Ho hundred-something you know.

(Laughter)

And they used to bring all the thing, he stamp his thing, and I used to address it at home and then mail it to each Eagle Scout. And he said, "This is a good promotion because a sixteen-year-old kid will never come by himself to eat. Their whole family is so proud of the boy that the whole family will come and eat." Some of the kids, they don't want to spend it, they go frame that thing, keep it. And then, sometimes they hold it up, they say, "You better spend it right away because the food is getting higher and higher" when we have to pay the waitress more, everything goes higher. Those [gift certificates] came eight dollars after that. The last one was ten dollars. Everything was getting higher, so he said, "Oh, five dollars, you cannot buy anything," so he used to give ten dollars for that thing. And then, when Kyotaru took over, that was it. They didn't keep up with that. We used to buy the badge, he used to buy the badge.

And he reads in the paper—my husband was always like that—he reads in the paper, and he saw this lady, at Hilton Hawaiian Village, I think. She working there so many years, and she had sort of—he look at it, said, "Oh this lady work there so long." He cut out the clipping and he send her a ten-dollar gift certificate. That happened to be his friend's sister, which he didn't know. He said, "How you know?" I don't think he knew because he just look in the newspaper, and he said, "Oh, this lady must have worked there," I sending one. She had an award from them, but he said, "I'm going to send in one ten dollar gift certificate." He sent it to her. And he said, "That was Kish's sister." That's how it worked. He always was like that.

MK: So he would notice somebody in the paper and . . .

BK: Even stranger he doesn't know, he's always giving.

- MK: And then, like you mentioned, that he was very supportive of the Boy Scouts. Were there other community organizations like the Lions or others that he was involved in or supported?
- BK: No, he wasn't involved in Lions, just Eagle Scout kids.
- MK: Kids he supported, yeah?
- BK: Get their badges.
- MK: He had all those photos of these people, how did these people get attracted to Columbia Inn?
- BK: The auditorium is right there, so before they go, they come and eat. In fact, Governor [George] Ariyoshi, I don't know if he was governor or lieutenant governor, every Tuesday, they used to come and eat because he loved to go to see that boxing. See, all the people, the sports people, they come and eat before they go to the. . . .
- MK: . . . to the event.
- BK: Yeah, the event. The managers come, they come sometime in the afternoon, he bring his fighters. In fact, the midget kids, about three of them came. So one day the manager says, "Oh Toshi, I'm going to bring the midgets over here."
- "Yeah, bring them in the afternoon." He came, they eat hamburger steak, they foreign. I don't know where they're from, Puerto Rico or someplace, and they eat hamburger steak. My husband treat them the hamburger steak. So he brings them over all the time before they go to fight. Even this guy, Andre, he's a big wrestler.
- MK: Oh, Andre the Giant?
- BK: Yeah. He came in and he drink by the case. Before he goes, he eats, and afterwards he comes in. He's a nice guy. And his ring, my bartenders, she has to put this much in to get this in.
- MK: Oh, fingers?
- BK: My son, Norman, has to be get three to put this ring. He's real Andre the Giant, but he's such a gentleman.
- MK: I think, off tape, you were mentioning that some of the *sumō* wrestlers also developed a relationship.
- BK: They come down. That was when Gene was there, too. So, Gene would know—I don't know how he brought them. Because of that Kuhaulua, because of him, I think.
- MK: Jesse "Takamiyama" Kuhaulua.
- BK: He doesn't go in. He sit with us. All the girls from next door, they come. He talk story and all that, he was really nice. He used to like Gene. I think, by that time, my husband had passed away. Before then, Gene was already around in the restaurant, so he knew most of them. Then we supported Rainbows. The Fabulous Five, when Pennybacker them used to play, they used to come all the time. All the time, when they get through,

the Fabulous Five. In fact, they made one papier-mâché with Fabulous Five, we had it in our restaurant. Yeah, they used to come there. When he was there, a lot of sports people, used to come there.

MK: I know that you folks had a round table, how did that start?

BK: We had that from the old Columbia Inn in Chinatown. That's my husband's idea. We brought it down here to Kapi'olani. We especially made the spot where we can put that, so the newspeople used to sit around. They always want to stay around together. We used to have a broadcast there, too. Gene knows most about that sport broadcast on Sundays. So, we know a lot of sports people like Jim Leahey. In fact, we had—something Proctor?

MK: Mel Proctor.

BK: Yeah, Mel Proctor. He got married there.

MK: In the restaurant (laughs)?

BK: In the bar, right there by the round table. I think he's also Catholic, so the Catholic [priest] wouldn't even come in the bar to marry him. So he said—I don't know if that was Toshi, I think was Gene. That part, I'm not too clear. And he says, "Oh well, we cannot." Must have been Toshi. Judge Shintaku, he was coming there. I didn't know he was judge.

MK: Harold Shintaku.

BK: Yeah, that's the one got into so much trouble. Anyway, I didn't know he was—he's also a sportsman. He used to come with a bunch of guys. He said, "Well, the judge, maybe he can marry you folks." So he asked him, and he said, "Okay." In fact, he married him. Two times. Had one waitress married over there too with Judge Shintaku. He came with his robe on, and I look, I said, "Hey!"—yeah was my husband because he scold me—"I didn't know you was a judge."

He said, "Oh you, you not supposed to talk like that to him." I thought he was only. . . .

(Laughter)

MK: So, wedding ceremonies were held in the bar.

BK: Yeah, with him, and that was all, he [Mel Proctor] was with the KGMB then. They all came over, [Bob] Sevey folks, the place was packed. Sevey came in, he said "Buy the house a round." Everybody was just standing around, that's how it was. It was real packed.

MK: After the wedding ceremony, you sort of had a reception over there.

BK: Yeah, they had cake. We had another one that—one Japanese lady, girl, and this Caucasian guy. I forgot what's his name now. Anyway, we were sitting down and I heard they were talking, the two were talking that they're going to get married. And I said, "You folks want to get married?"

And he says, "Yeah."

I said, "Where you folks going to get married?"

"That's what we talking about."

"Why don't you get married here?" because we had one already. Their [wedding] was in the afternoon, in between job, they have to go announce it. She was a Japanese girl. I think I heard they were divorced, but I don't know. Anyway, we said, "Oh, okay." So we made finger sandwiches and things. They brought the champagne. It was real good. They got married there. (Chuckles)

MK: And they were TV announcers, too?

BK: They were TV announcers. And, Mel Proctor and Gene, they still get together, when he come over like that. He married one nice Filipino girl. She was real nice.

MK: Columbia Inn had all these celebrities, and it was quite well known, Columbia Inn. I was wondering, though, were there any times when Columbia Inn had a rough time? Any year or any period that you remember in your memory when it was rough for you folks?

BK: After a while, yeah. Just before we sold it, it was pretty rough, so that's when I told my son, when Kyotaru came to approach us, I said to sell it.

MK: During regular year, were there slow periods during a year? Regular cycle of busy time and slow time?

BK: When my husband was living then, when we closed midnight shift, was slow, so we have to close it. Other than that, was not too bad. Just before we sold it, we had a rough time.

MK: Why do you think it got harder?

BK: I don't know why. I think the liquor law came hard. People never used to come after nightclub like that. They used to go home because they're going to get caught left and right.

MK: You also talked about some of the real good times where you had the weddings. Were there other times that stand out in your memory that were really unusual or really good at the restaurant?

BK: Those were the times when my husband was around, was really, we used to be so busy especially at the bar area used to be busy because they all used to come down there. People like to eat in the bar more than they want to eat outside because they want to meet them. We used to have some—Tom Selleck used to come quite often, and they want to see him. There were some others that used to come.

MK: How important was having a bar? How important was it to have that bar?

BK: Most of the places where you have restaurant, you have to have a bar, unless they not that busy. They just like to have just one or two cocktails before they have their dinner. Some of them, they get through work, like KGMB announcers, they have a few before they go home or they meet people over there and they sit and talk. Unwinding, I guess, you call that thing, before they go home. So it was really good.

MK: So you had the newpeople from the news building and then you had the KGMB people.

BK: KITV, they used to be nearby, too. We used to have them, too. Somebody was telling that, "If I don't have anywhere to go, I go to Columbia Inn and just sit in the bar and somebody will come and we get together and talk." They don't make arrangements and say, "Let's meet there." Once a while, maybe, but most of them say, well, they alone. So they just go there and sit in the bar, and you see all your friends come. That's what they said. So they said that they liked to go there and sit there. When they got no place to go, and you meet there. Even the girls, sometimes they have to meet someone there, they say, "Columbia Inn was so easy," not like a bar that you go in there, just like if you sitting there, you waiting for pick-up or something like that. There's no such thing as that, everybody respect even the women. They said, okay, they can come over there. The cooks, when they get through work, they come unwind. So they can sit around and talk.

MK: So the cooks from other restaurants or the cooks from your restaurant?

BK: No, our cooks. They don't want to drive the car and go somewhere else, they just come. That's when we were running. Kyotaru one, I think one of the cooks got out of hand so no employees can eat. They said they were kind of—anyway. So we used to have a guy named Bill, and Eva, our chef, she's a good singer too. Then, we used to sit every Friday, Saturday, we sit in the bar. We used to have instruments upstairs. Guitar, *'ukulele*, and she used to sing. So every Friday we used to have jam session like, for a while. Then, some bus drivers, they used to come after work, so they used to sing. Every Friday, oh, that place was just thumping with people.

After we sold it, it was all different. You see, you have to be there, like myself. When my husband was there, he was always in the bar so he get to know everybody. Gene, he had a family, so he don't stay too much in the bar. Once in a while he come around, but he take care during the day. I was there most of the time, and then one of the girls that work next door, she used to bring me home all the time. I'm there. My husband says, "Anytime they go to Columbia Inn, there's one of the Kaneshiros there." Norman worked, Frenchy—Frenchy is Gentaro's son—he works in the night, and he's there. I'm there, Gene there, Tosh there. So he said, "Even though you don't know anybody, somebody is there. You can talk to them." That's why, they said, they like to come there.

Get so much. One of these reporters, he passed away, but he said, "You know, Bea, you should write one book about this. What happened in there."

I said, "Why don't you write it." He said get so many things happen in there. And Nobu Inouye used to come, the seascape artist, used to come there all the time. But, you know, they all old. One by one, they passed away.

MK: What about politicians? It's not that far from the capitol.

BK: Yeah, politicians used to come too for a while. But after a while, I don't know, they didn't want to come too much in the bar because they're going to think, "Oh, that guy is in the bar all the time." So they come in to eat, like [Mazie] Hirono them used to come in to eat all the time. They come in, eat. But they never used to stick around in the bar, because they don't want to be known to say that, "Oh, that guy always in the bar drinking." I guess they don't want to get that type. So, that way, changed, too. But the old way, they used to come. I used to see them around. That's why was interesting, that's how Gene got interested in working in the restaurant. Otherwise, if it was old Columbia Inn, I don't think he'd like it. I don't think he would stay because nobody interesting to talk to, but there he learned a lot of things from them, too.

MK: About when and how did Gene get involved?

BK: When was it now? He was going to the U [University of Hawai'i at Mānoa], and he dropped off, he said he wanted to rest. And then the draft got him, just forgot about that. The draft notice came, and then so he said—Friday he was supposed to go in, I think was Friday. When he went down to Fort DeRussy to get into the reserves, and I guess somebody asked him, "Gene, can you type?"

He said, "Yeah."

"I need a typist."

Sworn in right there, and Friday he didn't have to go, he was in the reserves. He went to Fort Ord, New Jersey. He'll tell you all about that, what he did. When he came back—because before then he worked while he was waiting to see what he was going to do, he helped us. He used to cashier, he just used to cashier first, and then he used to seat the people and all that. Then he got to know people, I guess he got interested in it. At first, he wasn't interested in it.

MK: From your side or Toshi's side, were you folks in any way encouraging him in any way to get into the business?

BK: No, no. Because we had Gentaro's son, too. We didn't say. It's up to him what he wanted to do. But because of that waiting and nothing to do, he cashiering, then he got into it. Even Norman was the same thing, because he went into the reserves. He went in Air Force Reserves and then he came back. While he was waiting, he was cashiering and all that thing. And then, he got interested, and then he worked.

MK: How did you and your husband feel about your sons getting involved in the business?

BK: If it got interesting, it was good for Tosh. They help him a lot. But, I felt sorry for the wife because restaurant you got to work holidays and weekends like that. When he [Gene Kaneshiro] went into the food service [for the state department of education], they was happy. Get so many holidays, weekends doesn't work; had more pay than what Kyotaru was giving him.

MK: You kind of mentioned that when you're in the restaurant business, you're not going to have the family holidays. What else was hard about being in the restaurant business?

BK: It's really hard work. Holiday is the one that you're supposed to stay with, but we used to celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's with the family. All the time, we used to do. I think New Year's we used to close, for a while. And then, we used to close before twelve on New Year's Eve, but the girls say, "Oh, no. Have it open until two o'clock." They encourage us to open because "We got no place to go. We want to stay here." At least people are milling around and they're having fun, working, so that's why we stayed open until two o'clock. But, New Year's day we used to close. One day. We get the holiday. But when we came Kapi'olani, it was open. New Year's day, Christmas day, every day was open. But we can take off, and we get all the workers, so we take off.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Earlier you also mentioned that Gene could remember the names of all his workers at the Christmas parties. Since we're just talking about the holidays, what kinds of times did you folks and employees get together?

BK: Every year we get Christmas party. They used to have a banquet hall down at Ala Moana Center.

MK: Yeah.

BK: I think Spencecliff used to run it, I think. We had it over there several times until they closed, then we went to Pagoda. We close that day and we all have our Christmas party. For our own employees that we were working, the kitchen help and the front people, mostly was people that worked swing shift. Midnight shift, they just come in. Swing shift used to get more girls working, so the girls got together. Christmas Eve, the girls make all the food. One shift used to get through at eleven [PM]. The front shift and the back shift get eleven. And then we used to get one Christmas Eve, the girls make the food and we go in the party room and we get together. And New Year's Eve, the cooks make the food and we get together. But then when they closed, they started to close on the midnight shift, then everything, we can't. Gene used to make, he used to call it, nightclub safari. We go to nightclub, who wants to go. And he make arrangements, we go see Beamer Brothers, [Frank] DeLima, all those singers that kind. DeLima one, I think we took about, thirty-five of us went, because some of the husbands or something. But mostly was the night shift people used to go. The swing shift people used to go all the time because the night shift was good enough to come half an hour early for them so they can take off. We used to there.

When you do that, the swing shift girls, we used to go to a fashion show used to get at Royal Hawaiian. Then, who wants to go, you know. Luncheon one, we used to go to fashion show. When you go like that together, when they work together, they be more friends instead of just go there and work and they grumble about each other and all that thing. But when they go together, you be more friends and you help each other more. They talk about what they did, and all that thing. So one of the girls say, "Hey, let's go to the luncheon."

She said, "Yeah, let's go."

And we used to go there. For a while we went there. But daytime people, we invite them to come safari, but they don't want to go they say they got to go work early and all that. Only one or two girls used to come with us. You do things like that, the girls would be so close, the cooks, too. You don't fight in the kitchen.

Even the cooks. Had one girl, all she tattletale, right in front the cook, and she telling me about him right there. I pull her on the side, I say, "You want to say something bad about them, you know why they go after you all the time they don't make your order? Because you tattletale. Don't in front of them. You want to tell me, you tell me behind. Then I'll see what they're doing." So I say, "You going tell in front of them, they're going to hate you." She's so dense. When Christmastime come around, we all chip in ten dollars for the cooks. Front girls get all the tips, right, the cooks don't have tips. So we chip in ten dollars and we split it up and give it to them. This girl don't want to give. I said, "November comes now, you folks be nice to her because she not going give otherwise."

So the cook used to tell, "Oh what you want? Okay."

"January you can go after her, but from November, you be nice to her."

Because she said, "I not going give them nothing because they're not nice to me."

I said, "You see?"

He says, "Yeah, okay."

Finally, she give in. I say, "Just give little bit because you going get your name over there, too" and the cooks going look, "Oh, she gave me something."

MK: So part of running the restaurant is like human relations.

BK: Yeah. That's why I have to iron them out. The waitresses get mad with each other, "Why you guys mad with each other?" I have to go talk to them. They say, "Okay, okay." And sometimes, you know the friends, they get so many cliques, too, restaurants. You know how they work late. And they whisper, whisper. I said, "Don't whisper to each other, you want to say something, tell it to everybody."

"No, we not talking about them."

"I know you not talking about them, but they think you're talking about them." when you whisper. When the person pass, you're kind of quiet, you don't want them to hear. It's not about them, but they will think they're talking about her. I said, "Don't whisper. I told you folks not to whisper to each other." They whisper later.

(Laughter)

I tell you, really. I had to watch them. Some of the new people, when I go in, especially Chinese or something, they do so good to me. I tell them, "You don't have to be good to me, I can see if you working or not, but you be good to the others." Because they can see. They bring you this, they bring you that. "No, you don't have to be good to me." I said, "I know if you working or you not working, I would know." It's hard. You have to put them, you know, at distance. You cannot be close to one person. Later on, some of them you get close to, but later on.

MK: So that was part of your job as the owner. How about Tosh, would he have to deal with the personnel a lot, too?

BK: He do, too. But, we never just yell at them. If they do something wrong, he bring them on the side and talk to them, what they're doing, but we never yell at the employees. You know some of them, they just yell at you when you do wrong or something. We never yell at them. Even Gene, too. I think that's why they stick with us long time because we don't act like. . . . Like Tommy Trask, he was ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union]. The wife was nurse at Straub, Japanese girl. And then Tommy Trask them used to come and drink with all the—we call them the DM boys, the district managers from next door. The district managers is to put the newspapers here and there. They used to come, and Tommy used to come with them. He like to come our place. He and a couple more, about four or five ILWU guys, used to come. Tommy said, "You know, Bea, I don't think this place can be unionized."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "You guys working more hard than the workers."

(Laughter)

When you see them, sometimes they go in, they watch what the boss do, yelling at the girls, yelling at this, yelling at that. That's when they unionize the place. They just telling them. He said, "Yeah, you guys work more hard than them." Even [Harry] Weinberg used to come. Weinberg used to own this building. They used to live upstairs. "Don't worry Tosh, we not unionizing, just came to eat."

(Laughter)

[Arthur] Rutledge used to come. Rutledge come and I tell them they come in to spy.

He said, "No, no. No worry."

Because otherwise, they going try unionize, hard, small place like that. Big place, I can see that because the people, they don't know what they are doing. Only those close to the boss know what they doing, I can understand that. But, the small kind places, you know. That's why Tommy Trask always used to say that, "You guys work harder than them. No worry."

MK: About when did you folks sell Columbia Inn?

BK: We sold it—what time we sold it now? My husband already was gone. He died in '81, yeah, about that time. After that, I think, my husband died, '81. Around that time.

MK: You mentioned your husband's death, how did that affect the business?

BK: It affected more because he's not in the bar, around promoting. Because Gene cannot be all over the place. So they used to come, but you can feel it, it's not as it used to be. Something is missing.

MK: So it made a difference then, especially in the bar where he used to be.

BK: That was pretty hard then.

MK: If your husband had not passed away, do you think it would have still continued?

BK: Maybe, we're not sure. But then, already, the business was not as good. And then, Kyotaru Company came in. It's easy for Gene, too, I didn't want him to be running the whole show. It's hard on him. I told him, "You know, Gene, sell it." I was already ready to retire, too, so I cannot be helping him. I say, "Sell it." And the wife is a teacher, so she's not going be interested in restaurant, right, and the daughter is not going be. Nobody going take over under him anyway. And Frenchy them wasn't too interested in it. Gene was holding the whole thing. So I feel sorry for him, so I told him to sell it. So he said, "Okay." He sold it.

MK: How did you feel when the sale was finalized?

BK: I felt better. It's just like Times now. I know the wife, Ethel and the husband Wally, the two of them retired already. The son is working, one son is working for A & B [Alexander & Baldwin] or something, but two sons. I told Ethel—she was kind of cringing if they're going to sign, had about a month to think it over, and finally they signed it and they sold it. I told Ethel, "Ethel, so good, yeah?"

She said, "Yeah."

I said, "Now you folks are retired, you don't have to worry about your boys running the place."

She said, "So relieved."

It's come to that, you know. Because Costco opened, Sam's [Club] opened. It came so slow, it's not as. . . . So much, when they started Times it was really good because they didn't have too many, like only Foodland. In fact, Gene told me that Foodland is on sale, too, they're looking for buyer. Everybody, Star Market is getting hard time, too.

MK: Changing, yeah?

BK: Yeah, because of the big. . . . the younger people—like we go to regular supermarket—the younger people they go to Costco. They get the card.

MK: How about like Columbia Inn? In the beginning Columbia Inn didn't have to worry about fast food outlets attracting people, you didn't have to worry about Mainland companies that opened up restaurants here.

BK: Didn't have too much, that's why.

MK: How did these things affect business?

BK: When we was running it, they didn't have too many. Even the restaurant, the family-type restaurant was only us, Wisteria, Flamingo, and this type of restaurant, people don't want to open. They want to open steakhouse or fast food because you don't have to hire. Steakhouse you only get one cook and one helper in the pantry, they can do it. But when we get ours, we got to hire so many people to prepare this because it's a family restaurant. You've got so much to do. That's the reason why more places have steakhouse and fast foods. Then Mainland chain came in, so they get all those ready-made kind cutlets, and all that things. They don't have, see. We went out, so now only Wisteria and Flamingo. Where else now? Columbia Inn at Kaimukī, they say they're kind of busy. Not too many businesses have that type. Even the Kaimukī, they have the . . .

MK: Big City Diner?

BK: Yeah, it's almost like a fast food, plenty French fries and all that things. But they don't have. And then, a lot of buffets came out. Chinese one is a lot of buffet. But when we had, they didn't have that many. Then gradually, all the Mainland firms came in with McDonalds like that—so competition. That's why it's hard. Even if over here, my friend used to run the Wikiwiki Coffee Shop, they have to quit. She said that in order to have that restaurant going, it was nice, but they have to renovate \$30,000 worth. And then, they can stay on the site; otherwise, they got to come into the Food Court. They were almost retiring age, too, they just want to work until they retire. So she said, "No, forget it." They quit.

MK: I know that you folks also had Columbia Inn-Waimalu.

BK: Waimalu started good, but then it fell off, it didn't go. That's why it just pulled down Columbia Inn. They bought two together, that's why we said okay.

MK: When you folks had Columbia Inn, were you involved in the Waimalu one, too?

BK: No, Gene folks used to go there, I never did go there. They had their own workers and all that. And then, when Kyotaru took over, they made more Japanese.

MK: How come you folks decided to expand back then?

BK: At that time, this fellow, Gene's friend said was really good. Not too many [competing restaurants], and all of a sudden, like mushrooms, they all came up. When we did it, didn't have any. That's why the thing came down.

MK: We live kind of nearby. In the beginning Columbia Inn was about the only place you could go to, but then that Pearlridge area developed, Pearlridge, Pearl City area.

BK: Oh, just came up in no time. That's why it just went down. Pearl City Tavern, too, went down, that's why they sold that place, too. They were doing good because they were the only Japanese restaurant over there. We used to go down there and eat, too, because we knew the boss. It's all changed.

MK: George Fukuoka.

BK: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: You were in the restaurant business from Columbia Inn time, 1941, all the way through the 1980s, when you look back, what do you think about your life in the restaurant business?

BK: I would think it was hard job.

(Laughter)

But, interesting, though. You get to meet so many people. I used to tell the girls if they working, they get hard time when they just get married, the kids. You learn how to be waitress because you don't have to buy new shoes, you don't have to buy new clothes. You wear one shoes and one uniform, you can do it. And you get cash all the time because you get tips. Once they start doing that, they don't want to work office because they have to wait for—the main thing is you can eat free. Meals comes with it. But when you work in an office, unless you get an executive job, you have to eat, you have to buy clothes, you have to buy shoes. They said, "Yeah, that's right." Once they start doing that, they have cash, they cannot work other places. They have to wait for payday (chuckles).

MK: True, yeah?

BK: So I say, when you get hard time, you have to work. This is the best thing for you. You don't have to spend too much money to earn it. You can make a goal. Waitresses used to make good money, you know. They make good money in tips, and all of a sudden, they got to put in so much. They used to put in just a little bit for tax, but now they have to get

percentage. It came to be percentage, even if you make that much, the percentage, just take it out.

MK: In the beginning you were telling me that there wasn't this custom of tipping a certain percent, yeah? Like nowadays, we almost automatically . . .

BK: They didn't have. Like those days, everybody didn't have money, so they hardly tip.

MK: About when do you think people started tipping?

BK: We were wartime, but after the wartime, you know they start tipping. Wartime they get Pearl Harbor, they used to hire, they call them the defense workers, and they used to get good pay. They had money, that's why they started to tip. No more such thing as 10 percent or 15 percent now you have to go through that. Actually, if you don't have good service, you don't have to. But, in Waikīkī, people from Canada come, they hardly tip. It's very small. We went to Canada, a big bunch was eating. My husband was there, when they left he tells me, "Look at the table, how much they tip." Hey, only fifty cents. If in Hawai'i, if American people were there, they get at least about ten dollars. This small, even over here. The Japan people one, because they put down gratuity so much, they think it's on it. So every place they don't do that. Some of them will ask, if the thing [tip] is [included], they look. You say, no, then they give. But otherwise, they think it's in it, so they just pay. Because how many of them used to work there, they say hardly tip because they think it's in it. But, you don't want to say that's it's not on it. But the thing, they ask, some of them, they ask if the thing is in it. She say, no, then they'll. . . . Because they look at it, they get a tax. And gratuity, nothing there, so they will ask that and give them money.

MK: So for you, the restaurant business was like hard work, but you . . .

BK: It's fun, yeah. You get to know them, you get to know people, all types of people. Some of them is so nice, some of them is so grouchy (laughs). Some of them, everything, how many, taking it back and forth, back and forth. I don't know if you've heard about Charlie Memminger [columnist], he hate mayonnaise. He's the one hate mayonnaise. My grandson hate mayo, so I said, "Hey, my grandson hate mayo." Gave me one shirt say "I hate mayo." And then he sat there, he had a club sandwich or something, he returned it because he said it had mayo on it. And then, nowadays butter is light-colored, when you put it on [looks] just like mayo. Second time he returned it again. He said, "Oh, they put mayo again." he cannot eat it. I look. And then, all the reporters sitting out there. I say, "Charlie, let me get it for you." I get it. When I look at it, it's not mayo, it's butter. I say, "Give me one toast without butter without anything, dry one like that." So we just put the whole thing with dry toast. I said, "Charlie, this is dry toast because you returned two times. It wasn't mayo. It was butter, but you not having butter either." So, give this. All the guys was laughing. Because he look at it, it look like mayo and he cannot stand mayo. But it's not mayo. So I said, "Well, next time you order dry so they don't put anything on it." Because he's going to return 'em, to look at it. The guys laughing, say, "You have to take a good look at it." Until today he hate mayo, he writes about it.

MK: And then the last question I have for you is because this project is about Okinawans from Oroku who started in the restaurant business, what influence do you think being Okinawan had on being in the restaurant business?

BK: I don't think any difference with the Okinawan or the Japanese, the Okinawan people call them *Naichi* people. To me, it's the same thing, that's the owners.

MK: How about any characteristics, like how you folks view life or how you folks relate to each other? Would any of that happen?

BK: I notice that the Okinawa people are kind of easier to work with. They're more humorous, they're not tight. They're humorous. So, we don't really speak Okinawan, but we only know the slang like anybody else. When we get mad at each other like that, the cooks like that, they just yell at you. "You *yanakāgi*" means ugly in Okinawan.

"Oh, you *yanakāgi*" you can tell.

And when you tell that to the Filipinos, they tell you, "I bet you said I was ugly."

I said, "How do you know?"

He said by the tone. (MK chuckles.) You know, "You *yanakāgi*," you cannot say that in a nice way. But when you say *tsurukagi*, you tell in a nice way, so they can tell the difference. They will know, too. So we used to know the slang in Okinawa. Even the Hawaiian, what is this? She order cutlets, two times, and the cooks used to say, "Oh, *tachi*" means 'two' in Okinawan, *tachi*. She used to order cutlet, "Cutlet *tachi* time." (Laughs) They learn because they will say how many. After they all retired, then the new set is all Filipino, so we don't know what is what. It's not that humorous, but some of them is humorous, but you have to really talk. You cannot talk rough to them, they get mad really fast. You cannot laugh at them, they get hurt. I tell them, they're different. The Okinawa people you can tell, "You *yanakāgi*." And you laugh at them, but they call you back again, "You *yanakāgi*." And then it's over. But Filipinos, you don't know what, they hold grudge. Long time they hold grudge. So I tell them they have to be careful, they're different.

MK: So it made a difference then when you folks were running it and had Okinawan workers.

BK: When they retired, in between already, then we have to have Filipinos. The local Filipinos is okay, but the ones that come from Philippines, they think when we laugh at them, they think we laughing at them, and they hold grudge. So I tell them, "Hey, watch out, you just talk to them nicely." Then when you go overly nice, they think you like them, and they're so different. The Philippines kind is real different, so you have to be just casual with them. Some of them intelligent. There was a man, used to wash dishes, and he was an officer in Philippines. He always sings, humorous more, so I told him, "What were you doing in Philippines?" because he looks retired. The other guy says, "Oh, he was officer in the army." that's why he's more intelligent. So, you talk to him, he's more intelligent, so it's real different.

Had this girl, she not supposed to give them the paycheck, they're supposed to come up and get the paycheck. She used to pass the paycheck. You know Filipinos get all the kind same name. She gave the paycheck to this guy, somebody else's, and he didn't know. He just went over there, he signed his name, and then he was going to cash it. Naturally, the teller gave him bad time. He came back and he was so mad with her, because it's just like he *wen* steal somebody's check. "This not your check!"

"But they gave me this check," he said.

"This not your check, this is not your name."

But he didn't look, so after that, we told her to let them come up. Because when I used to give them the check, I used to tell them to make sure it's your name, because they tell you the name—pronouncing and reading it is different. I say, "Is this your name?" because when you talk to them, their name is not the right name. I don't know how they call, I said, "How come your name this? This is your right name." I used to show him, and then he look, "Yeah, this my name." and that's how I used to give them. You know, the teller thinks that he stole somebody's check.

MK: That's horrible.

BK: But he keep on telling them, "They gave me the check." They don't understand. He came back and he make fuss. So I said, "No, no give." Because when they get mad, it's dangerous, too.

MK: So over the years then, even your personnel changed, yeah?

BK: Plenty change. The girls wasn't so bad, you know, the girls. We had one Black guy came to cook, he came, he left. He came back again, asked for the job, came back again. Those days we had hard time getting cooks, so he came back again. Something happened, he left again. They tell, "Oh, you fired." He come, beg for the job, so they give. I look at him, I say, "Hey, you're just like one bad penny always coming back." Then he tells me—because the new boss now, the old-timers know when my husband was working, they told him, "Her husband working, we no more this kind trouble. Everybody was really good." So he tells me, "I heard about your husband, he was such a good man. He never fired anybody." Because he used to tell them when you do something wrong. He say, "I don't want to fire anybody because I feel bad if I fire, so you better be good." And you know they're all good. Even the Filipinos like that, they're all good. But then later, the new young Filipino is lazy, lazy. Old-timers are really good, hard workers.

MK: I'm going to stop it now.

END OF INTERVIEW

The Oroku, Okinawa Connection: Local-style Restaurants in Hawai'i

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

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